BECOMING SHERLOCK

THE POWER OF OBSERVATION AND DEDUCTION

STEFAIN CAIN

Becoming Sherlock: The Power of Observation & Deduction

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DEDICATION

To all those who strive to see that which others cannot, in an effort to become happier and more successful in life.

"The world is full of obvious things which nobody by any chance ever observes."

Sherlock Holmes Quote

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

As you read this book, you’ll want to remember the fictional character, Sherlock Holmes, and recognize the impact this character played on future generations of all ages.

INTRODUCTION

Wouldn't you love to have "superhuman" observation abilities like Sherlock Holmes? Well, contrary to popular belief, the capability to observe and deduce is not a natural ability. Professional detectives actually take years of practicing to cultivate good habits associated with mindfulness.

The truth is that most of us usually don't notice the world around us. And, it seems that the younger we are, the more we are into "multitasking". I put that in quotes because recent studies have shown that there's actually no such thing as multitasking. In actuality, your brain is really simply switching from one task to another, and alternating. These days, we're even likely to see children on skateboards with cell phones!

There's so much "noise" around us and with constant interruptions, the result is that we want to "prioritize" and work much faster to get everything done.

But, oh, the price we pay.

If you're like most people, you're a victim of the multitask society that has trained your brain to become less efficient by trying to do the impossible. And, if you're like most people, that issue is *exactly* why you're reading this book.

You tell yourself that you're prioritizing to get things done more quickly, but in doing so, you're missing out on a lot of details and keeping yourself in the bad habit rat race.

You might think that you're just not an observant person or you just don't have that ability. But the truth is that you have *subconsciously chosen* not to see the details in the

world around you. So, all you have to do is make that choice to want to become more aware… and watch how it will change your life!

Here is where you're going to learn how to slow down and become more efficient in everything you do.

"*Slow* down and become *more* efficient?" Sounds like an oxymoron, I know….

However, it's true… the more you can learn to slow down, the more you will allow your subconscious mind to "really see" more – taking in and remembering everything. Studies have shown that slowing down and focusing more attention on detail will actually train your brain to assimilate the good habit of becoming more observant and productive.

And that's what this book will teach you…

What will you get out of it? That depends on how you might answer these questions…

- Do you know what your bad habits are and what you want to change?
- Do you know how to replace those bad habits with the new habit of being observant?
- Do you practice daily mind exercises to improve your observation and deduction capabilities?
- Do you know how to stimulate your imagination and creativity?
- Do you know the difference between seeing and observing?
- Do you know how to tune into the body language of others?
- Do you wonder how new information connects with what you already know?
- Do you constantly ask yourself a lot of questions?

If you answered “no” to any of the above questions… then perhaps you need to ask yourself one really important question…

- Do you *really want* to train your brain to have the superhuman observation and deduction abilities like Sherlock Holmes?

Experts tell us that we make an *unconscious choice* to *not* see things around us… some things that could really benefit us in so many ways.

Learning how to become observant won’t happen overnight, but the idea is to accumulate the right habits in your lifestyle – things that you actually find pleasure in – to stimulate your ability to observe, deduce, and make the right choices.

And, it really is all about the choices we make in life.

If you look at a homeless man on the street, and compare him with a successful happy person, what makes the difference? When it comes right down to it, the difference between success and failure is the choices we make along the way. While the homeless man may have fallen into substance abuse or allowed his temper to put him in substandard place, the successful individual has made better choices in his life. Perhaps he made a decision to marry a good woman or to work his way up to a better paying position….

… Or perhaps he has made the choice early in life to read all the books he can and fill his brain with more details around him so he *is able* to made better choices.

This book will teach you exercises that will take no more than a few minutes each day to improve the choices you make with the power of observation and deduction. Like most of us, perhaps you have allowed your brain to be

“trained” *not to* look at the world around you. This book will teach you how to *retrain* you brain to notice the small – but important – things in life.

Deduction is all about looking at the entire situation, and then taking a few paces back to logically review by applying critical thinking. The “right choice” is the conclusion you will come up with based on the true facts found through critical thinking. The chapter about critical thinking will go into details about how to do this.

Most of us can’t remember small details about any given situation. The fact that Holmes can logically come to a conclusion based on remembering detail seems like a trait that isn’t even human. However, it really has to do with building a knowledge network by connecting new information with what you already know. There is also a chapter in this book devoted to increasing your memory by building your knowledge network.

With a little practice, becoming aware and perceptive to make the right choices will become second nature.

As you read this book, you’ll see mention to the fictional character, Sherlock Holms as a model for being able to observe and deduce with perfection.

Sherlock Holmes appeared first in print in the late 19th century, with stories taking place in the period of 1880 to 1914. Recognizing that this was long time ago and many of us might not be familiar with the character, you may want to instead think of the character “Gregory House” from the more modern TV series, “House”, where House is modeled after Sherlock Holms, and Wilson is modeled after Watson.

With these characters in mind, this book is designed to help you retrain your brain towards that kind of perfection by cultivating

your awareness, leading to a successful, happier life.

CHAPTER 1
THE PROBLEM WITH MULTITASKING

You're looking at your emails and notice that someone has sent you a funny video. Then, as you open, you figure it's taking time to download, so now you're checking out Facebook. The video has now opened, but you're not paying attention anymore because now you just noticed it's your cousin's birthday and you never sent a message. You daughter is calling from the other room, "Mom, where did you put my clean socks?"… You answer, and try to get back to your email… then your husband comes in and asks when dinner will be ready. At this point you're just ready to explode, and you haven't even gotten *anything* accomplished.

Sound familiar?

Most of us like to take pride in being able to multitask with several plates in the air… what's one more, right?

Unfortunately, the current research shows that, not only is multitasking a drain on your psychological and emotional well-being, it's also dangerous to your health! "So I'll just take blood pressure pills to get everything done at once", you're thinking. But ah... you're really not getting as much done as you think.

As much as you might want to believe that multitasking is the way to success in the 21st century, it's actually the very thing that' s holding most of us back.

This is the first thing we need to address when you're thinking about building your brain to work like Sherlock Holmes' brain, because he wasn't even faced

with *that* problem. So naturally, we need to get this bad habit out of the way before progressing forward.

By the way, since the stories of Holmes were in print so long ago, and many of us may not familiar with the character. You may instead want to think of the character "Gregory House" from the more modern TV series, "House", where the character of House is modeled after Sherlock Holms, and Wilson is modeled after Watson.

Remember how House was so perceptive that he seemed to have a "mind reading" power"? That kind of brain power, without the cocky attitude, is what most of us desire today. Training your brain to advance towards this kind of perfection is totally possible, and it's what this book is designed to help you do.

The effect of multitasking on your brain…

With the 21st century, the power of the internet has emerged. As useful as this tool might be, it has created a generation of multitaskers who believe that adding one more thing to your plate is as easy as opening another window on your computer screen.

When you think you're doing "two things at once", the reality is that your brain is forced to switch between thinking one way, and then thinking another. Psychologists call this "serial tasking" rather than multitasking, because your brain is switching from one activity to the next, and back again.

Since our brains are not built for "snapping back" into place like a rubber band, the result is that it takes a little time to focus whenever you get back to your task at hand.

Studies have found that…

Multitasking stunts emotional wellbeing.

We all know someone who brings their cell phone to the dinner table. And, instead of carrying on the dinner conversation with the person you're with (like everyone *used* to do), they begin texting the person on their phone who just sent them a message. This harms your emotional intelligence. Your brain is focusing on someone else rather than the person you're with, displaying rude behavior. When left unharnessed, this can snowball into more emotional problems. Furthermore, your brain can't handle everything. When you have 20 tabs open on your computer, with lunch on your desk, and you're chatting on skype with your best friend, this can ultimately have a pull on your emotional wellbeing, creating a difficult personality.

Multitasking hinders our ability to manage affairs.

Contrary to popular belief, those who are "experienced multitaskers" are actually worse at multitasking than those who usually take their time with one task before engaging the next.

Clifford Nass, a communications professor at Stanford, conducted a study about this phenomenon. The "experienced multitasker" actually will tend to use much larger parts of the brain for a task that could be done more effectively when using an isolated portion of the brain. His study concluded that, the more you multitask, the less your brain is able to filter out unimportant information.

Our brains naturally do this, by the way. You might have five acts in front of you at the circus, but your focus is primarily on only one thing. We have a natural tendency to "filter out" that which our brain deems unimportant. When you glance at a menu, your attention is mostly on one section where your interest lays – Either the diet section, the low cost section, or the seafood. You get the idea.

This is an important discovery, because, if your everyday habits include jumping from one task to another, constant "serial tasking" as they call it, you're actually creating mental havoc on yourself.

Multitasking hinders creativity…

The ability to be creative stems from focusing your attention and remembering things that might happen during the day to spark your creativity. You might have had an extraordinary experience happen to you – one might even call a miracle. However, when you get to work, you're distracted, and begin focusing on several other things at once. After work, it's time to begin that book you wanted to write, and all you have is a mental block.

People who are highly focused on what they're reading tend to be more efficient at completing tasks.

I used to think that becoming so engrossed in a book that you don't hear your friend talking is a fault. However, that was before I was aware of a recent study. It appears that the ability to "tune in" to distractions will slow you down!

When computers first came out with the window function that enables the users to "work on several things at once", many people believed it was more productive. And, it does make sense. You'd think that if you're working on several things at once, you could accomplish more.

However, our brains are designed to prioritize to do whatever task is most important at the time, and then switch to the next task. The brain performs two functions here: "goal shifting" (the decision to prioritize the task), and "role activation" (changing the gears in your brain to adjust to the task you're working on). In the case of serial tasking, David Meyer's study from 2001 concluded that overall productivity can be reduced by as much as 40%,

since every time your brain “switches gears”, it’s costing you time.

If you don’t believe me, try this self-test…

Take a piece of paper and draw two lines horizontally.

Let a friend time you as you conduct the following tasks:

On line one, write “I know how to multitask.”

On line two, write the numbers 1-20 in sequence.

Those two tasks, when done first one, then the other, usually will take about 20 seconds.

Now, try again by using your super-duper multitasking ability.

Write one letter on one line, then one number on the next line. i.e., “I” on one, “1” on line two; “k” on line one, “2” on line two, and so on.

You will find that the result not only shows that the time will be at least double the initial 20 seconds, but you will also most likely find mistakes or sloppy writing.

What can you do about it?

Ten “stop multitasking” tips to help you…

- Quickly assess everything you need to do, and determine priority.
- Eliminate distractions.
- Organize your tasks on a “to do” list and determine which to do first.
- Decide to complete one task first, and give yourself a time limit. Pay attention to how much

more efficiently you have completed that task.

- Keep a note pad handy to write down interruptions – things to be done later, to make sure you're not switching gears unnecessarily.
- Have only one inbox for your paperwork, and one for your email. This will keep you from having to look in several different places to see what needs to be done.
- Break up the plan of what you will be doing within the day, with a "block" for urgent stuff, and smaller blocks of time for miscellaneous tasks.
- Do what's most important first. Try to get the two or three most important tasks on your list done before noon. This will give you less stress in the afternoon, with more free time for what you really want to do.
- When you feel that distraction and want to check your email because you just heard your phone go off, stop yourself. Take a deep breath and continue the task at hand.
- In between tasks, monitor your email and task list. I find it helpful to color code incoming emails to give me an immediate flag that "I'm awaiting a response", or "I'm awaiting approval". I delete spam immediately so as not to be distracted more than necessary.

You might find it difficult at first, but once you realize how much more productive you are, you'll have the incentive to try harder on making sure your focus is only on one thing at a time. The next few chapters will go into more depth about how to become more aware and observant.

CHAPTER 2:
TAKING NOTES TO IMPROVE OBSERVATION

Most of us don’t pay complete attention to anything around us. As mentioned in the last chapter, this is largely because of multitasking in today’s society. However, taking notes is one positive habit to acquire that will aim you in the right direction.

Start taking “field notes” throughout the day…

Note-taking is a good habit acquired by many successful businesspeople. And, it makes sense. Remember in school how you would remember things better when you wrote them down? If you were to simply listen to a lecture and not take notes, the average person retains only about 10%, long term. (This is based on a study of students retaining seminar information; reported 90% forgotten points after 14 days.)

"We remember what we understand; we understand only what we pay attention to; we pay attention to what we want."

- Edward Bolles

The quote above takes mention to our different kinds of memory. Taking field notes will help to ensure understanding, and you can’t possibly take notes unless you’re paying close attention.

How memory works…

As you may already know, we have both short term and long term memory.

Short term memory…

Did you ever try to memorize a phone number? You know how challenging this is to hold in your memory for any length of time. The average person can hold only seven pieces of information at a given time; hence, we have 7-digit phone numbers. Put a foreign area code before the number, and see how much more difficult it is. And information that needs to be *learned* has to be transferred to long term memory.

Long term memory…

This is whatever information you have learned and can remember. The transformation process from short to long term memory happens one of two ways...

- Through repetition, “rote learning”
- Through understanding, (connecting a relationship with the new information to what you already know)

Both ways of learning are effective; however, studies conducted on learning and memory always reveal that going back and reviewing the information learned makes a substantial difference. And, this, of course, is the reason for taking notes. Experts tell us that the best time to review your notes is within a day or two after the event.

A study conducted on forgetting textbook material with students revealed about 17% retention after 63 days. The problem with remembering course material is that we tend to only remember that which is of interest to us. Studies show that when we can link what we discover to a long term goal, it’s more apt to stay in our conscious mind.

For example, if you’re remembering notes from school, try to imagine how what you’re learning can be implemented in your future career. If you’re writing a book, then try to takes notes with the idea of what you would write about.

Keys to remembering…

- Pay attention by choice. We tend to only listen to things we're interested in, so just make the choice to choose to remember.
- Use visualization: Create a picture in your mind of what you're trying to remember
- Tie the new information to what you already know. This puts the idea in a "file" in your brain. Sherlock Holmes referred to the brain as the "attic" of knowledge. Make sure your "brain attic" is neat and orderly.
- Repetition and Review: This is where note-taking comes in. Make sure you review your notes and picture again in your mind what you've learned. Re-phase in your own words so that it makes perfect sense to you.

If you're the kind of person whose mind tends to wander, then this is for you. Taking notes while you're "on-site" or "in the field" is way of keeping your attention on the here and now. Scientists recommend taking field notes throughout the day wherever you are.

A study done by Carrell in 2002 analyzed the effects of note-taking with students in various subjects. Results revealed that 67% of the students improved on the listening test, and 75% agreed that they could retain more information from the lecture when taking notes.

There are three main types of field notes, all of which you'll want to utilize.

Types of Field Notes…

- Jotted Notes

These are the most resourceful, and you'll want to make sure you always a have a small, pocket-size pad of paper with you. Jotted notes can be taken in the following format…

When on-site, jot down a brief description of what you want to make mention of. Also, be sure to note how you feel at that time. Remembering your emotional state will help you link the incident to a memory.

Later, review your notes, and draw distinctions between what you observed, how you felt, and your analysis of the situation.

- Mind Notes

On occasion, you will not be in a position to take jotted notes, so this is where you want to take mind notes as accurately as possible. Take a mental image of how you feel, including all five senses, remembering smells, feelings to touch, what sounds you might hear, and linking to what you can see, or even taste if it applies. Take note of your initial reactions, how you might feel if roles were different.

Now, take your thoughts and feelings a step further and ask yourself why…

"Why did I react that way?" Or "Why was he trying to avoid answering my question?" This will help when it comes time to draw connections to come up with the right answer.

Once you start noticing and paying attention to the world around you, you can start tuning your

observations into ideas. Remembering *how you feel* and *taking in all senses* are most important here.

- Interview Notes

Taking notes while talking with someone will naturally require permission first from the person you're investigating. Don't be creepy. Be sure to give your full attention to the person you're talking to, and don't interrupt. It's good to stay on friendly terms, as long as you're not getting too personal.

Organizing your field notes….

Notes can be taken in the form of text, pictures or charts, whichever makes the most sense at the time. You'll want to make sure you include the following for each incident you're noting:

Things to include in your notes…

- Time and place
- Sensory perceptions, using all five senses
- Specific facts noted – what happened as you see it
- Your personal response – how did you feel at the time? How did others feel? Did you learn anything from this observation?
- Take note of language used and summarize the event
- Ask yourself questions about what else you want to find out

Try to focus on what's relevant to the situation. When you acquire the habit of taking notes wherever you are, you're training your brain to pay attention.

So what can you do first? …

Start by trying to pay close to small details. For example, in a park, examine the behavior of a duck. Take note of when they fly and in what direction. Try to draw a parallel to why.

You can also pay close attention to people at work, taking note of little habits of each individual.

Once you’re in the habit of putting details down on paper, it will become second nature and your brain will automatically start thinking like Sherlock Holmes.

CHAPTER 3:
THE MIND PALACE CONCEPT

While putting notes down on paper and reviewing regularly is a good start for boosting your memory, there's actually a "short cut" method that should be noted here. It's the fun alternative to "rote learning" described in the previous chapter. And, it's also much more effective.

The "mind palace concept", also known as the "memory palace technique" has its origin in ancient Greece. Years ago, people relied on this technique to remember. And a good memory, by the way, was much more mandatory centuries ago.

Today, we're spoiled with calculators, cell phones and the internet. Why try to memorize Mom's phone number when you have direct dial on your phone? And why try to memorize a grocery list when your spouse can text it to you?

But wait a minute… this means that the people from the 1800's had better memories than we do? Do we really want to allow our brains to memorize *less* as the years go by?

Not a good idea… just think of where we'd end up.

So where did this "mind palace concept" all start?

According to Greek mythology, the Greek poet Simonides of Ceos came up with this system after a tragic situation at a banquet he had attended. He was supposed to meet up with two men; however, when he arrived, the two men had been victims of the hall collapsing. Everyone at the banquet had been crushed, and Simonides was asked to remember the names of the bodies.

And, this led to an important discovery. Simonides thought of each of the victims based on where they were sitting at the banquet, remembering the names of each one as associated with their place at the table. This was the birth of the “loci method”, later called “the memory palace”.

Wow! Who would have thought? The fact is that the human mind, while having difficulty memorizing a list of items, can actually remember space very accurately.

Think about it. Do you remember the address of your childhood house? Maybe not. However, think about the special orientation in the house. Remember? Most likely, you remember the rooms, the furniture and which way to turn from the front door to find your own bedroom.

So let’s use this tool constructively…

Imagine how Simonides must have felt as he witnessed the crushed bodies of the banquet hall. He had an emotional response with each body as he remembered the name of the person who was supposed to be in that position.

Ah, so maybe the idea is to combine emotion with spatial orientation. This very popular technique grew to be even more popular among monks all through the Middle Ages, when people had to rely on memory to commit religious texts to memory.

In today’s society, we all have some “place” that’s familiar to us. Most likely, you will actually remember the spatial orientation of every house you’ve ever lived in. And, did anything that was really emotional event happen in some of those rooms you remember? Bingo! Combine emotion with space, and you have an image you just can’t get out of your mind.

Let’s apply it with a grocery list…

Suppose your spouse gives you a list of six things to get at the grocery. In normal circumstances, you'd have to write down each item. But she's telling you on the phone, and you're in your car driving with no way to write anything down.

How can you remember?

The technique here is to link the item with the space you remember.

Picture your house, for example:

The first item is milk.

You imagine this milk in the driveway of your house, gallons and gallons of milk going bad in the sun. You're worried that the neighbors might be complaining soon about the stench.

The next item is soap.

Now you're visualizing the soap on your doorstep. It's starting to suds over and you're worried that people might slip and fall if they approach house. The suds are starting to climb as high as the front door and you're freaking out.

The next item is corn.

You position on the corn in the next area of your house, the entryway. Corn is growing all over the entrance to your house as soon as you open the door. Now, anyone who's lucky enough to get past all that soap has to deal with rows of corn as high as the ceiling.

The next item is cookies.

You get past the corn and enter the living room where you have planted the cookies. There they are, sitting on top of the TV. But, oh, the cookies are cooking themselves and they smell delicious! But they're melting all over the TV and

you want to find a way to salvage the delicious cookies while saving your TV.

The next item is bananas.

This is, in itself, a boring item. But you have planted this item in the kitchen in your home. You visualize a bowl of bananas on the kitchen table. And, there are more bananas in the kitchen sink. You look in the dishwasher – more bananas! They're all over your kitchen, peeling the skins off each other and dancing naked.

And the last item is cereal.

At this point you've waded through the bananas and have made your way to the garage, where you're visualizing cereal all over the garage. Each box is crying out, "Pick me, pick me!" and you laugh as you think about which one of the boxes has the most outrageous cry for help.

Sherlock Holmes used this technique in the play, "The Holmes of BCC/Masterpiece Sherlock" played by Benedict Cumberbatch. Of course, he masters the technique in an instant, because he's been practicing this method for years. You can master it, too. It might take a little persistence in the beginning, but the more you work at it, the more efficient you're "mind palace" will remember everything you command it to recall.

At first glance, you might think that this technique can only be effective with a small grocery list. However, people have been known to use this system for even remembering a deck of cards. World Memory Champion, Dominic O'Brien, used the technique to memorize 24 decks of cards in sequence. Additionally, the memory palace technique has been used to learn a foreign language or memorize a presentation.

So how can YOU start utilizing this technique in 5 easy steps?

1) Choose the place you want to commit to memory, your “palace”.

Remember, the more familiar your palace, the better the technique will work. Choose a location where you can instantly visualize every room.

Also, always choose the same route to walk through your palace. If your normal walkthrough is from the kitchen to the garage, then always go that way – don’t alternate and enter through the garage.

Your home is only the most obvious place to choose. You can also use the technique with your school, your work place, or a local park with which you’re familiar.

2) What features in your palace are memorable or distinctive?

Commit to memory the items in your palace that are always there; the front door, the TV, the couch, the coffee table, etc. Practice your walkthrough by going on a memory walk in your mind. However you visualize, it should always be the same… from left to right, front to back, whatever. Certain distinct features in each room should capture your attention; the TV in the living room, the large mirror over the piano… you get the idea. As you continue your “mental walkthrough”, take mental pictures as you go. You’ll be surprised how easily you can remember these “memory slots” to recall events or items later when you use the technique.

3) Make sure the route in your memory palace is firmly imprinted.

You will probably want to conduct a “walkthrough” several times in your in your mind before attempting to plant items to remember. You’ll want to know your palace like the back of your hand. This is the most important thing: your memory palace *must* be **100% imprinted** on your mind.

If you’re beginning this technique for the first time, try starting with only 10 locations in your palace, and conduct the walkthrough in the same way over and over. Notice the stationary items that are always there. It can help if you say out loud the names of each room and the items you see.

Another thing that might help a newbie on this method is to first right down the sequence of all the rooms, preferably in diagram form. We all actually think in pictures, so this will serve as a shortcut.

As you conduct the mind walkthrough, make sure you’re always looking at the items in each room from the same point of view.

This step is the most important to build the foundation of your memory palace. You might believe you’re done, but do it again. You must be 100% confident of where each room and key objects are in the room in order for the technique to work.

4) Now it’s time to put your palace to work.

All of the rooms with associated objects you’ve just committed to memory are called “memory pegs”. As described in the example earlier in this chapter, make everything you’re associating with each peg an outrageous memory of some sort. You can have fun with this as you’re dreaming up ridiculous scenarios to associate with each peg.

Use your imagination to see how you can expand this technique beyond just memorizing groceries. If you're reading a history book, chunk down into chapters and summarize only four main things in each chapter, using the memory palace concept each time. For example, if the statue of liberty is one thing you need to remember, imagine her dropping her flame and having to bend over to pick it up. Associated items that are funny actions are easiest to remember.

5) Repeat the journey in your mind.

Now everything you want to remember is firmly planted. All you need to do is conduct another walkthrough, again and again, noticing the silly objects you've planted, all in their respective places.

Remember to always start out your walkthrough in the same place, and always travel each room in the same sequence. As you walk through each room, notice the funny actions you've created and replay in your mind.

Once you can walk through and remember each event in each place successfully, it's time to reverse the walk and to through your palace from end to start, again paying very close attention to each memory plant associated with each memory peg.

If you're having difficulty at first, make sure you are in a place where you can apply complete focus to this activity, with no interruptions. The more relaxed you are, the easier it will be to focus.

The great thing about using the memory palace is that it's not only extremely effective, but also FUN! Think again about how Sherlock Holmes puts his thoughts in his "brain attic". This is the attic with your thoughts. Once you've

perfected this strategy, you have an orderly brain attic ready to memorize more at any time.

CHAPTER 4:
MEDITATION TO IMPROVE AWARENESS

Whether you're trying to focus on rote learning, understanding learning or the mind palace concept, the underlying common denominator is that nothing will work unless you're completely relaxed and focused. This is where medication comes in.

If you've never tried it before, you might be a little skeptical at first. Don't be swayed by this. If done correctly, it can be an extremely powerful tool for your mind and body.

How does meditation affect your brain?

Scientists have recently made some phenomenal discoveries using fMRI scans. In a nutshell, our brains don't process information in the same way as when not meditating. Scans reflect a decrease in beta waves in the brain. What does that mean? "Beta waves" reflect being alert to external stimuli, and "alpha waves" primarily reflect being awake but with eyes closed and relaxed.

During meditation, the frontal lobe, the part of the brain responsible for reasoning and self-conscience awareness, goes "offline".

“Embrace silence since meditation is the only way to truly come to know your Source.” …
Wayne Dyer

Perhaps you’ve tried it once or twice, and you’re thinking, “yeah, right… never did anything for me – my mind is always racing.” If this is you, then just be aware that it’s like that for everyone who just starts out. In fact, if your mind is racing, then you need this more than ever.

Just like you can’t build muscles on your body by going to the gym once in your life… by the same token, you can never expect to get the point where you notice the benefits of meditation without a lot of practice.

Of course, the technique of medication is an ancient therapy adopted by the Indians centuries ago, but only recently have we been able to apply physical proof to what it’s actually doing.

When meditation is practiced religiously, just like exercise for the body, the results become more evident with more practice. This is because meditation causes the neural pathways in your brain to loosen. And no, that doesn’t mean you’re losing your marbles.

The medial prefrontal cortex (let’s just call it the “me center”) is the part of the brain that relates to our experiences. It’s the “me center” that’s responsible for all that worry and self-doubt.

Meditation loosens the connection to the “me center” which also, at the same time, strengthens the “assessment center” (the center for reasoning). Therefore, it keeps us from letting our worry emotions run away with us and allows us to apply rational thinking instead.

One example might be that you're overwhelmed with bills and your emotions have stressed you out so much that you've stopped thinking rationally. You're frantically grasping for straws and becoming more stressed by the minute. With regular meditation, your assessment center becomes strong enough to offer your mind valuable solutions, allowing you to see the positive points in your life to overcome your problems.

Meditation for compassion…

Furthermore, research has shown that meditation helps people become more compassionate. One experiment conducted by Harvard University reports that the amygdala (the part of the brain responsible for emotion) shows a decrease in activity during meditation. Subjects in the experiment were presented with images of good, bad or neutral response relating to compassion for others. The result was that they found the emotional responses were repressed, and they showed more compassion when confronted with troublesome images.

But how can meditation help you in becoming observant?

As you know, being observant has a lot to do with memory. And, yes, meditation also helps memory. A study was done by Catherine Kerr, Researcher at Martinos Center for Biomedial Imaging. Results reported that subjects in the study were able to screen out distractions and increase productivity. And, the ability to ignore distractions helps with memory and learning new information. This, in turn, helps improve memory greatly.

Additionally, meditation helps creativity, something your brain needs when taking the facts you observe,

remembering and deducing results. Here, however, it's the kind of meditation that makes a difference. Scientists found that people who practiced open-minded meditation demonstrated greater creative abilities than those who practiced focused-attention meditation.

Open-minded (OM) Meditation…

"Observation without judgement is the highest form of intelligence" -
J. Krishnamurit, philosopher and spiritual teacher

The idea behind "open-minded" meditation is that you're practicing awareness of thinking. Here, you are aware of your thoughts and feelings, and you become "the observer" behind the one with the thoughts. During meditation, you might be faced with two kinds of thought…

- Stream of consciousness (the voice in your head with self-doubt)
- Awareness (the voice in the mind)

"Huh? What's the difference?" you say. Relax, it comes with practice. During meditation, you're taking a step back and just "letting it be", as the Beatles say.

Can you tell the difference between the voice in your head and the voice in your mind? No, probably not at first. But open-minded awareness is something that can be practiced even when you're not meditating. It's simply being aware of how your body is feeling at any point in time.

Focused-attention (FA) Meditation…

Focused-attention is also extremely beneficial in achieving goals. It's similar to self-hypnosis, and some find this easier

to do. This is because it's easier to force your brain to think of something rather than nothing. I would suggest beginning with this kind of meditation if you've never done it before.

Similar to OM meditation, your focus is on your body, but you can imagine yourself living in the moment where you want yourself to be. In your state, you *are* that successful businessperson, writer or athlete. Make sure that what you're focusing on involves the tactile sensations, visual sensations, sounds, smells and tastes.

You can spend as little as five minutes in a day to practice meditation, and it's a great stress relief in the middle of a busy day.

How do you do it?

Just follow these five easy steps…

1) Sit in a position where you are comfortable, but not so comfortable that it's easy to go to sleep. While the traditional martial arts position is the "seiza", sitting on your legs with your knees in front, most people are likely to find this uncomfortable. Don't sweat it. You can also just sit with your legs crossed as we did as children. Or, if you have back trouble or any ailment that might get the way of feeling comfortable sitting upright, then feel free to sit in a comfortable chair resting slightly back, but upright enough to stay awake. Now focus on one point, straight ahead.

2) Now start taking deep breaths. Be aware of your breathing deeply, in through your nose, out through your mouth. Be aware of how your belly expands with

every inhale. Be aware of how your anxiety is leaving your body with every exhale. Try to make the first couple of breaths take the longest, perhaps counting to five before you exhale. Then start breathing normally, but staying aware of how relaxed and stress free your body feels with every exhale.

3) Aim your thoughts towards your body, focusing on how relaxed your toes feel, how relaxed your legs and thighs fee, working your way up your body. I like to "envision" my anxiety actually leaving my body in a cloud of dust. If you start to think about the stresses of the day, don't worry. It happens to everyone. Just try your best to refocus your attention to your breathing and your body.

4) Watch the image of yourself in your happiest state, focusing on a single word. It could be love, forgiveness, awareness, calm, peace. You can also focus on an object – something that feels good. The sound of trickling water, or the feeling of the sea breeze are suggestions of things to focus on. Even though this is called focused meditation, don't try too hard to force thoughts. Simply focus on what you love, and allow happy thoughts to come your way.

5) Use the object you're focusing on to keep you anchored in the present moment, enjoying the peace and relaxation. When thoughts come to you, notice the patterns in your thoughts. If negative thoughts or judgement arises, say to yourself, "I forgive", and envision the thought being taken away in a cloud of dust. Then, stay focused on how relaxed and grateful you feel for your newfound peace. Allow yourself to

come back to reality, and continue sitting quietly for another couple of minutes before opening your eyes.

As you become more accustomed to experiencing meditation, you'll want to increase the time spent. Initially, only five minutes will take the edge off, and you'll want to work up to 20 minutes a day.

The more you practice this technique, the more you'll be aware of how you're able to release negative thoughts and judgements.

And now, with judgments, stress and negative thoughts out of the way, you're making the way to become more creative.

CHAPTER 5:
HOW TO STIMULATE YOUR IMAGINATION

Meditation is one way that adults have learned to get back in touch with the true self and allow the creativity of source breed imagination. But there are several ways to stimulate your creativity.

As a little boy, I remember picking a flower for my mother. Or, at least I thought it was a flower. "Oh thank you, how pretty", she said, as she tossed the weed aside. What she saw was just one more of the hundreds of weeds sprouting all over the lawn. What I saw was a delicate little yellow center surrounded with tiny purple pedals all around it.

How is it that children seem to have better imaginative abilities?

Actually, truth be told, they don't. However, there are several reasons why children will allow their creative abilities to branch out, where adults hold back.

- They're not yet embarrassed to do silly things.

As adults, we have been taught for years to just follow the rules. Color within the lines, they say. Sit up straight, take breaks when the bell rings, pay your bills on time, keep your car insured… etc. If not, heaven forbid, there will be consequences to pay.

Experts define maturity as "acting appropriately" and "conforming to social rules".

We have been taught that's it's just not appropriate to slurp spaghetti or finger-paint on the walls. As adults, we see hours of scrubbing down the walls later – and we miss the creativity of the moment.

In reality, however, adults have the brain power to actually be more creative than children – and that's been demonstrated by movie producers and cartoonists.

The real underlying reason that children appear more creative is that they haven't learned yet how to be embarrassed about their behavior.

When you're with your friend at dinner, why not start acting like a different person and start talking with a strange accent? Why not go up to a stranger and stick out your tongue and see what they do? Because it's embarrassing!

Yet, let's face it, being a mature adult all the time is down-right boring. The problem is that we have allowed reality to beat down our natural urge to be creative.

- Children are trusting.

As much as it's a good thing to become self-reliant to some extent, growing to depend on no one but YOU also breeds skepticism of others.

As adults we need to remember that trusting each other and forming human bonds will allow us to be aligned with how we really are and who we were meant to be.

- Children don't assume the worst.

This is a bad habit that I've been trying to get rid of for a long time. As we grow older, we tend to become more self-conscious. You see your neighbors talking across the street, and one of them glances towards your house. "The neighbors are gossiping about me", you think.

Your friend points out to you that your blouse button as popped. "She thinks I'm getting fat", you think. Yep. Leave it to adults to take every well-intentioned comment and twist into something offensive.

You tell a little girl she's beautiful, and she'll smile and twirl her hair; but you better not even think about extending the compliment to a beautiful 30 year old woman.

Children aren't apt to attach labels to people on how they look. They just see people. I remember when my daughter was about 5 and two men came to the house to look into buying one of our puppies. One man was black, the other white. When they left, my daughter said, "I like that man." "Which one?" we inquired. "The one with the dark hair" was her reply. How interesting that she didn't even see the skin color.

- A child's life is simple.

Sometimes a simpler life with no responsibilities allows you to be more creative and see the world as it is. As a child, we see something new and want to explore it. As responsible adults, we see jumping into a swimming pool and think about how cold we'd be when we get out if it's a windy day with no sun. We think about hiking around a lake, and then we remember that the way back might be less enjoyable if we get tired.

Conversely, the child on the swing simply wants to pump as high as she can, taking in every moment of the feeling of being free with the wind against her face.

How to embrace your inner child…

- Decide to do something outrageous.

Forget about thinking how embarrassing something might be. I've seen some instances where people have done something creative that you'd think was embarrassing, yet proved to be quite rewarding.

For example, I witnessed a video where a man stood blindfolded on a busy street with a sign hung on his body, "Please hug me." "How outrageous, I could never do that!" you might think. Yet this proved to be an extremely important psychological phenomenon.

For a long time, the man just stood there with arms out stretched while people walked by and ignored him. Some, of course, pointed and giggled, and some just starred and walked on.

Then, finally, one woman came up and gave him a hug. Once she started the ball rolling, then one more came up, and it wasn't before long that there was a line of people waiting to hug the stranger.

Imagine being the first one to think of something like that, and brave enough to carry it out. Embracing your inner child takes bravery as an adult because we just need to get past the worry of what others might think.

- If you have a child, try making up an imaginative bedtime story.

This will not only spark your own imagination, but your child will enjoy it ten-fold. My grandfather had this down to a tee. I remember when my brother and I would spend the night, and he made up stories about "Jimmy Long-Tail", the mouse who constantly got into trouble.

We loved it and looked forward to it all the time…. "Tell me a Jimmy" my brother would plead … and in the middle of the story he'd pause, and think about what he would say next. "And then what happened?" we'd ask – not even knowing that Gramps was making the whole thing up as he went along! Funny how the days before children's TV shows, video games and internet relied more on people just using their imagination for fun. We need to get back to that.

"To stimulate creativity, one must develop the childlike inclination for play"… **Albert Einstein**

- Engage in an artistic craft.

"Every child is an artist. The problem is how to remain an artist once we grow up"…
Pablo Picasso

What seems natural to a child becomes a self-doubt portrayal as an adult.

Dr. Carlson's study on child's creativity reveals that adult's attempts at self-control often get in the way of imagination. She refers to the "executive function" of our brains that tends to want to always follow the rules and hold ourselves back from saying inappropriate things.

Her conclusion was that "practice in pretending" allows creativity to flow naturally. Children love to pretend to be

Batman or Wonder Woman. And, the more they get outside themselves, the greater their imagination.

We can allow our imagination to take off with developing artistic skills. It might help to join a class where you can get feedback from others. This will help you build your confidence as a creative being.

Drawing or painting a picture while listening to music can really spark creativity. Make nonsense lines based on what you hear and then draw something from them.

Or, as an alternative, simply redecorate your home. Change around the furniture, or paint the walls. Adding color to your environment can literally add color to your life.

- Learn something new. You can even simply make the decision to learn a new word every day. The more you learn, the more you'll want to learn.

Some people like to learn a new language and then visit another culture. Learning more about other cultures – whether in person or in books – is a great way to inspire creativity.

- Read!

Reading or taking in new information of any kind is a tremendous imagination enhancer. With the technology of today, you don't even have to take time out to read a book. You can order audio books and listen on your way to work, or watch informative YouTube videos while you're working out at home.

The benefits of nature…

Another thing that can give you a huge creativity boost is the simplicity of nature.

Studies have found that a simple 20 minute walk through nature can help inspire creativity and solve problems. People who have been stumped on solving problems have reported that the answer will just “appear” after a walk through nature.

Additionally, it has been reported that even changing your screen saver on your computer to a nature scene can give you a cognitive boost.

A new study on this issue was conducted by Ruth Ann Atchley, Associate Professor of Cognitive & Clinical Psychology at the University of Kansas. The creativity test was called the “Remote Associates Test”, and given to 60 backpackers, divided into four groups.

Another group of 60 backpackers received the same test, but taken at a different time – four days into the hike. The second group who were deeply immersed in nature scored 50% higher in creativity. Ages of subjects ranged from 18 to over 60, so it appears that age doesn’t make a difference, because the result was always higher when surrounded by more nature.

Nature is a place where our mind can rest, relax and let down those threat responses."...
Ruth Ann Atchley

The conclusion is that when we’re forced to immerse ourselves only in the common stress that modern life offers, our creative juices and positive thoughts are sapped.

What can nature do for you?

- A 20 minute walk through a local park can spark creativity and give you a definite cognitive boost.

Of course, more time is even better if you can manage it. The decision to ride a bicycle to get to your destination rather than public transportation is a good one if you can get on a route that will expose you to natural scenes. Many places have nature trails these days that extend for miles.

- The outdoors is better for your health.

Walking and being in the great outdoors does a body way more good than just sparking creativity and cognitive abilities. A recent study on health discovered that depression was reduced by 71% in persons after talking a nature walk.

- A nature walk helps your analytical ability.

According to the Journal of Environmental Psychology, a 20 minute walk is all you need to restore your body from stress. New ideas appear and your ability to analyze problems is improved after a walk through nature.

How can you put this into action in the middle of a busy day?

- Make getting outside part of your morning ritual. If you have a dog, take it for a walk. This will motivate you and make your walk mandatory every day.

- Walk your child to school or take a walking errand. Any convenience store that is close by is an excuse to get some exercise and be outdoors.

- Play a game outdoors. This can even be done on your lunch hour with your colleagues. When you can get a chance to get back to play like a child, your afternoon will become more productive.

- Enjoy gardening at home. Many people have made the decision to “go green” and start their own vegetable garden. Even the decision to plant some colorful flowers can do wonders for your creative skills and give you more energy.

- Make time for a break outdoors. Effects of being near and listing to water has also proven to be quite effective for clearing the mind and making room for creativity. Take advantage of the best of your environment wherever you are – whether by a lake, the beach or mountaintop. Mix up where you take your walks for the best stimulation of brain and body.

How can we start being more creative? Just start believing in yourself. You are a unique gift from the Universe with unique ideas. Don’t let your self-doubt get in the way. Look at the world through the eyes of a child, and think about the design flaws. What’s needed out there? Then imagine a wonderful solution.

CHAPTER 6:
HOW TO NOTICE WHAT'S NOT THERE

You might have heard the Sherlock Holmes story…

It began with the stairs leading up to the Holmes/Watson residence, 221B Baker Street. In this deduction, Holmes had remembered there were 13 steps on the way up. Watson wondered why he couldn't recall the number of steps, yet Holmes seemed to know without evening thinking about it.

Watson has seen those same steps just as many times. But ah… this is the difference between seeing and observing.

The secret to both seeing and observing….

The concept of actually *observing* everything you see is the focal point of mindfulness. Most of us only take in the skeleton image of what we see. We notice the man at the counter, but if we look away, and the man ducks down and a different man continues the conversation, it's only human nature to *assume* that the man is the same, even though it's a completely different person.

(That's the joke behind the word "*assume*" – it makes an "ass" out of "u" and "me".)

Conversely, when Holmes looks at a staircase, he makes a mental note of how many stairs there are, in addition to other small details – is there a railing, had something dropped on any of the steps – and other things that most of us might view as "irrelevant".

Arthur Conan Doyle, the creator of the Holmes character, was extremely brilliant in that he applied scientific wisdom behind all of Holmes' actions.

This kind of mindfulness, when learned correctly, can be applied to solving problems of any kind, decision making and imagination.

Selective looking….

We all have a way of "selective looking"… psychologists refer to this as fast thinking and slow thinking. Fast thinking uses our brain to make fast judgements, whether right or wrong, based on past experiences.

For example, we all know that artists use a shadowing effect to trick our brains to thinking that some objects are closer to us. In the real world, we know that objects appear smaller if they're further away, so when we look at an object in a picture, we make a quick "inference" telling us if they're up close or far away.

You can try this yourself by tinkering with PowerPoint images. Take an image of a railway or staircase and put in your picture. Now take a human image and place on top of the staircase. Take the same size image and place at the bottom to appear closer to you. Does the image on the top appear smaller? If so, your eyes are playing "tricks" on you.

Another popular optical allusion is the Marilyn Monroe / Albert Einstein picture. When you look at it from a distance away, the picture appears like Marilyn Monroe. However, as you become closer and more aware of the features, it turns into Albert Einstein. Psychologists call this a hybrid image.

Neurobiologist, Mark Changizi, studied another phenomenon and pointed out that, when we look at look at an image, distance and lighting become factors in how the image is perceived. The background lighting in the famous "blue/black or gold/white dress" has to do with the background lighting and shadowing effects. When you're looking at a color that you perceive should be in a shadow, your brain automatically compensates by making the color look lighter.

Size and colors… it's all relative and our brain is always "autocorrecting" what we actually see. The information we take in is all relative to outside information.

For example, look at two spots the same size with no background, and they appear the same size. However, if you place large circles around one, and small circles around the other, your brain will compensate by making you see the spot with the large circles seem smaller.

This is why dieticians tell us to put our meals on a small plate to make it appear like we have more to eat.

Remember the flower I found as a little boy, observing every petal, while my mother saw something completely different?

"The difference between a flower and a weed is a judgement".... **Wayne Dyer**

Perception is everything when it comes to what we see and hear. And it doesn't end with sight; our ears can also play tricks on us.

When we combine what we see with our eyes and hear with our ears, our brain takes a shortcut again and tells us that

we actually might be hearing something different than that which is real. For example, if you listen to a recording of a man saying “bar, bar, bar” and you hear it again, it always sounds the same.

However, listen again to the same sound and watch a man on the screen making different moves with his mouth to form “b” or “f” sounds, and what you hear is distinctly different. Now, instead of hearing “bar, bar, bar”, you’re hearing “far, far, far”. Psychologists call this the McGurk Effect.

Additionally, the “Tritone Paradox” discovered by Deutsch in 1986 points out that our brain focuses on only one tone at a time. Deutsch produced two simultaneous tones, one half octave apart. When the tone is played over and over, some people hear an ascending pattern, as if the musical notes are going up the scale. Others hear the opposite: an audible descending pattern. This phenomenon even works with musicians listening.
Why would that be? Psychologists tell us that the different perceptions come from how we perceive our own speaking voice, and the geographical location and languages in our environment as infants. Studies reveal a definite connection between the speech patterns we have been exposed to and how we perceive music.

The above phenomena point out that in order to observe things in our environment correctly, it’s important to take all factors into consideration. This is why Sherlock Holmes takes all senses into consideration when observing a situation.

Noticing what’s not there….

Have you ever heard the riddle about the ark? The question is this:

“How many animals of each kind did Moses bring into the ark?”

If you answered “two” from listening to your remembered bedtime story, then you’re like most people who don’t notice everything.

The fact is that the answer is zero, because Moses didn’t round up any animals into the ark; that was Noah.

It takes a keen observation to notice all the words in a given sentence, and it also takes practice to allow all your senses to come into play when making an observation.

The difference between inference and observation…

Scientists refer to “observation” as a way of accumulating informational facts by using all five senses. When you look at something, in order to keep your brain from making the common “fast thinking” shortcut, it’s important to allow all your senses to come into play.

The “fast thinking” part of our brain makes “inferences”. A certain amount of logical inference is necessary to make sense of what we see. Our brain collects the obvious facts and perceives them based on our past experience. Our brains have evolved to conceive “fast thinking” necessary for survival.

When we look at a tiger heading for us, we don’t stop to count the strips or calculate how fast he might be advancing. Our brain simply interprets danger and we run away.

However when we're trying to observe a situation to gather as many facts as possible, we need to be aware that the fast thinking part of our brain might be getting in the way. Sometimes shortcuts can keep us from seeing the whole picture.

In the series, "*A Scandal in Bohemia*", Holmes explains to Watson the difference between observing and seeing. He points out that, even though Watson can see as well as Holmes, he never noticed how many stairs lead to their apartment.

Quantitative and Qualitative Observation…

When making observations, scientists make sure they're noting both quantitative and qualitative observations. "Qualitative" refers to a specific number. Holmes' observation of the number of stairs that led to their apartment is an example of quantitative observation.

Qualitative, on the other hand, refers to other characteristics that can be observed with our senses – things that have no way of being measured. Color, smell, taste or how something feels is an example of qualitative observation. Detectives use all their senses to make accurate observations. For example, I remember a scene in "Monk" where the victim had been blindfolded, but dragged through a garden with a distinct fragrance. This is how the criminal was discovered. Detectives will also take note of whether a room is messy or neat, and the temperature on a stovetop to see if it had been used recently.

Teaching yourself to observe rather than just look at things takes ongoing practice. Most of us tend to block out other information that we could recognize from other senses, because we simply fail to notice. Especially with today's

technology, we have a sort of tunnel vision as we're walking along with our headphones or cell phones. We actually get angry at interruptions, when it's possible that the interruption could have been that very thing that might have saved our life. (I've often heard stories about people who were stuck in traffic or had to return home to get something forgotten, and as a result, did *not* wind up in the twin towers on the famous 911 day.)

How to use your senses to increase mindfulness…

While learning to observe and start to notice things that others do not see will take a lot of practice, you might use the following notations to help you grasp the idea of how to use your senses to become more mindful and aware.

- Take note of your surroundings.

Most people tend to only see what they came to see. You walk into your office and you don't notice that someone left a full cup of coffee on the desk you pass. That kind of information could have been handy before you inadvertently backed into it, causing it to dump all over you.

- Take note of your feelings – how does your observation affect you?

You notice that the person next you in the theatre is wearing strong perfume and you remember your allergies. Now you can make the decision to sit somewhere else before your ability to watch the movie is impeded with a barrage of sneeze attacks.

- Be aware of how your "unintentional blindness" can block the truth in how you might perceive a particular situation.

Remember there’s no such thing as multitasking. Don’t allow that bad habit to block other things from your conscious perception.
As you make a decision to focus more on the “peripheral” things that others don’t see, the result of how it makes a difference in the way you make decisions may surprise you.

Learning how to observe and be aware of your surroundings will help you to become mindful with the use of all your senses. Pay attention to how your senses affect the choices you make, and you will begin to foster a greater awareness of your environment.

CHAPTER 7: HYPOTHESIZING AND MAKING DEDUCTIONS

Once you're in the habit of staying aware of your surroundings by using all your senses, you're better equipped to start making deductions.

It begins with a hypothesis…

The hypothesis, or educated "guess", needs to be drawn only after all pertinent information is obtained. And, that includes the "invisible" clues as well.

The idea, of course is to first collect data in the proper way as described in the previous chapters. Now you're prepared to allow your brain to come up with a good hypothesis.

As Holmes says to Watson, "it's a foolish man who collects mindless data to clutter the mind attic".

Of course there's more to that data than simply on that which we observe and take notes. We need to pay attention to what's not there as well. An example of this is when Holmes was able to solve the crime case by noticing that the dog *did not* bark in the night.

Omission Neglect…

As mentioned in the previous chapter, people tend to focus on only what's in front of them; only the information offered to them. Marketers love this!

Which cell phone would you prefer to buy?

Phone A: $100, Talk time 12 hours, Memory 16gb

Phone B: $150 Talk time 16 hours, memory 32 gb

Most people would pick phone B

However, you didn't notice what I didn't tell you….

What is the weight comparison? – Phone B is twice as heavy! And what if you found out later that the radiation was also twice as high with phone B?

People tend to only see and take note of the information given to them. It takes a little creativity to notice beneath the surface.

Being able to allow your brain to come to creative conclusions takes thinking outside the box, and allowing yourself to think creatively.

Contrary to popular belief, creativity can be learned with practice. Holmes teaches us that the orderly "mind attic" is necessary. So when we're gathering information, it's important to use the mind palace technique to "label" each of your memories in an orderly fashion.

Of course, with today's technology, most of us don't bother to memorize details because we can always simply "Google" anything at any time.

The Google Effect…

There was actually a study done about the effect that Google has on our memories. And, as you may have guessed, people do not tend to memorize facts like they used to before the internet. However, the interesting phenomenon is that people, instead, were likely to memorize *where* they found the information. This, in the

long run, can actually be even more useful, because we can extend that which is in our mind with that which is in the cloud.

As you recall your memories in your mind attic, you will probably notice a lot of incidences where the fragrance or order of a particular memory persists. This is because the sense of smell, being tied the most with human emotion, is the strongest link to memory.

Thinking outside the box…

Now that you have all your facts – the pieces of the puzzle drawn together from proper observation, it's time to begin deducing to make the right decision.

The hypothesis isn't simply drawn out of thin air, but a proper "educated guess" comes from a mind clear of clutter.

This is why Holmes will take a step back before starting his hypothesis.

How to take a step back…

Have you ever noticed that when you're distracted with several things and *not* living in the present moment, you're not as happy as you might be just enjoying where you are?

This is a lesson that Holmes has taught me. I remember how I was as a child, watching an ant climb on my hand and wondering what it would be like to be that ant… or picking the pedals of a flower and examining every detail.

I remember how happy I was when the thoughts in my head were so simple.

As adults, we are usually so caught up in our responsibilities and what we need to do next, that we fail to live in the present. It doesn't have to be that way. In fact, studies show that we actually can get more accomplished when we put all our focus on one thing at a time.

Conversely, as children, our minds are curious, always asking questions. This sense of constant curiosity is what we need to get back. It's the very essence of what keeps us sincerely motivated and happy.

And, as a child, we believe we can be anything we want. If you ask a five-year old if she thinks she's creative, the answer would be an emphatic "yes". How many adults do you suppose would have the same answer?

Believing that you can get what you want is extremely powerful! Children are believers that they can accomplish whatever they set out to do. We need to take a page from their book. In fact, the power of belief was proven in a recent study. People were asked to wear white coats, and comparisons were drawn on their cognitive ability to solve problems. Surprisingly, the people who wore white coats actually came up with conclusions easier and faster than those who didn't. The white coat simply made them feel smarter like doctors. And the results were astounding!

Allowing your brain to breathe…

Additionally, it's necessary to give your brain a "breather" and focus on something that's less cognitively taxing.

When this is done, the part of the brain that deactivates actually causes more creative juices to work the creative part of the brain, and the answer appears.

As mentioned in a previous chapter, a good way to clear your mind of clutter is walking through nature. This is an excellent “mind breather”. The relaxation techniques that Holmes would engage in were usually playing the violin, going to a museum, or simply sitting down and smoking his pipe.

In fact, the first step that Holmes would take is to sit and smoke…. “This is the 3-pipe problem”, he’d say to Watson. And, at the end of smoking the third pipe, the answer would come to him.

Some people decide to “sleep on it”, which has also proven to be effective in allowing your brain to come up with the right answer.

Reaching the right hypothesis is the most critical part of deducing conclusions.

Framework tips of forming an effective hypothesis…

- Begin with your conclusion.

  Most people try to frantically work towards a conclusion. However, Holmes teaches us that the secret lies in the ability to reason backwards. The normal way of thinking is from cause to effect. However, when we focus first on the outcome and reason backwards, the result is analytical thinking,

as opposed to synthetic thinking. Detectives will look for clues, which lead to root causes.

Reasoning backwards is more effective because you wind up with one hypothesis, rather than several, to test.

The primary scientific method is:

- State the problem – write it down or say it out loud. Holmes would state his problem to his associate, Watson, which served to clarify the problem in his mind.
- Collect your research data.
- Clear your mind and give form to your hypothesis.
- Conduct tests to prove or disprove your hypothesis.

- Clear your mind before approaching a problem.

If you have a theory in your mind before observing the facts, your emotion can tend to skew the possible result. A clear mind is necessary in order to approach your problem objectively.

- Collect satisfactory data.

Make sure you have all the data necessary before drawing conclusions. Also, steer clear of allowing your emotions to sway how you interpret your data. Collect only facts.

- Eliminate nonessential data and focus on vital information.

This takes practice. Making sure your mind is clear

before tackling a problem is the first step in being able to notice what is important and weed out the trivial noise.

- Get in the habit of observing everything around you, not just seeing.

Did you ever take a walk from your hotel and have trouble finding your way back? If so, then you're one of millions who is in the habit of seeing and not observing. Take mental notes of your surroundings – what color is the building and what landmarks are near? Once you're in the habit of observing, and not just seeing, it's easier to make deductions.

- As Holmes says, "Once you eliminate the impossible, whatever remains, no matter how improbable, must be the truth."

In your observation process, notice consistent patterns between outstanding and inferior achievement. Any fact that remains is critical. And often, it's something that you never would have expected. Here again, it's important to observe with a blank mind, which enables you to draw a more accurate conclusion.

Observe what's contrasting when the obstacle happens, and when it doesn't. Then, try to notice consistent differences. If you notice something that is consistently different, then this is a critical clue.

Once clues are confirmed, it's time to establish the root cause of the problem.

There are several deduction tools discussed in the next chapters to help fine tune your ability to notice consistent differences to establish your clues.

CHAPTER 8:
MAKING DEDUCTIONS FROM BODY LANGUAGE

When making deductions with people, body language is the first clue where you'd want to keep watch. You've seen those episodes with "Sherlock Holmes" or "Colombo", or "Monk", or even "House"… it's the tick, the blush, the hand tremor, the touch on the nose; these all are indications of how to find the victim.

So how can you develop that "Sherlock Holmes intuition"?

Much of what investigators notice that what many of us miss has to do with the ability to read nonverbal communication such as gesture. Everyone reveals some sort of body language that gives clues to their innermost thoughts. Much of the data you'll want to take note of includes body language.

Why is body language important?

Because 93% of all communication is nonverbal. Don't believe me? Think about a friend of yours who may have, teasingly, called you an offensive name, but at the same time, smiling or winking at you. Did you take offense? No, of course not, even though the words may have been downright rude or hurtful. You knew your friend was kidding because the body language told otherwise. This proves that we pay more attention to body language than simple words.

According to the body language expert, Allan Pease, there are basically three ways of interpreting body language,

remembered as the “three C’s”… cluster, congruence and context.

Interpreting Gestures in Clusters…

Just as a single word can’t convey a meaning until you hear the entire sentence, a single gesture also needs to be seen in the context of clusters. Three gestures, similar to three words for a sentence, reveal the entire thought.

Notice gestures that are incongruent in context…

This is a dead giveaway when you see a gesture noting friendliness and, at the same time, you note hostility. Danger!

For example, suppose a guy is on a date with a girl and his entire body is turned facing her, as if he wants to listen to her. However, his eyes are saying something entirely different. Every time a stranger walks by, his eyes glace toward the stranger and away from the girl. While his words might be saying that he agrees with her, his incongruent gestures are giving away his true inner feelings.

Another example is the famous incongruent smile. The mouth is turned up like a smile should be, but the eyes aren’t “smiling” with the wrinkles showing off the feeling.

Once you have the ability to spot a contradiction between what someone is saying and their body language, you have the ability to be perceptive.

Notice gestures that are out of context…

For example, the gesture of crossed arms usually means that the person is shut off and does not want to listen. In fact,

studies show people who sit in at seminars with their arms crossed retain 38% less information.

However, people also will cross their arms if they're cold, or they might have a friendly attitude but just holding a book in that position. The entire context needs to be taken into account before labeling anyone with a character trait due to their body language.

Signs of "no threat"…

Smiling is the first friendly universal sign of not being a threat. And, if you notice, a smile is generally contagious. When you smile at a stranger and they return the smile, an element of trust is introduced. Smiles with eye contact encourage positive feelings.

As far as smiling in a business relationship, it's best to send similar smile messages as those around you. A continual smile when everyone else is serious can come off as creepy or fake.

A false smile usually appears stronger on one side versus the other, and a tight lip smile where teeth are not shown shows that the person is trying to keep a secret.

Laughing is a sign of no threat and a great stress release. It also has been proven to aid in building a strong immune system. It helps others around you feel comfortable. People tend to laugh a lot less as they get older. Children are known to laugh more than 300 times a day, compared with adults who laugh on average about 15 times per day. Laughter actually has a lot more to do with bonding than humor.

Another sign of no threat is with the hands. When you notice someone with palms up or facing out, this is a sign "you can believe me". Perhaps Donald Trump was aware of this in the recent political candidate debate. Experts tell us that his body language screamed sincerity, and the pole numbers backed him up. Also, if you talk to others with your palms up, you're more likely to get answers to your questions, as others will unconsciously perceive you as being honest.

Conversely, crossing your arms will make you appear unapproachable – not friendly.

An eyebrow raise also indicates a non-threat. Try it – look at someone and raise your eyebrows; now watch them smile! This gesture is perceived as submissive.

With posture, although hands on hips can show aggression, if the elbows are held in close to the body, this shows submission.

Signs of deceit…

This can be detected easier in children, as they haven't yet learned how to control the give-away signs. But strangely enough, people have a tendency to make a gesture from hand to face as if to block information. These kinds of gestures are performed when we're either telling or hearing what we believe to be untrue.

Examples of a more repressed version like you would see in adults would be a nose rub, tug on the ear or touching the eyebrows to indicate deceit. People who are introduced to something they don't want to see are likely to rub their eyes or blink a lot. It's a powerful display of disagreement.

The eyes tell all…

The human eye, often called the “window to the soul”, has many tell-tales. Many of us are taught that good eye contact is important for communication. However, the research shows that it’s best to look someone square in the eye only about 50% of the time. Too much is staring, and too little is not caring. Allan Pease advises that you should actually give the other person at least three seconds to look you over before speaking or engaging in conversation with a new stranger. This is suggested to establish an initial trust with a stranger. In establishing rapport with a new person, eye contact should be about 60-70% of the time until finished with the introductory phase.

The following characteristics of eyes tell even more:

- Eyes constricted means that the person is not open or in agreeance with what they’re hearing. Not a good time to try to land them on your call to action. Conversely, dilated eyes (enlarged pupils) reveal openness and trust, and can also indicate a problem solving mode. If you’re trying to sell someone on an idea and their eyes are dilated, it’s time for your call to action! More than likely, their decision will be positive. If you’re in a conversation, notice the eye dilation; they’re interested in you if pupils are dilated, and they’re challenging you if the pupils are constricted.

- Eyes looking to the right and up indicate the person is trying to remember something they know. Eyes straight across to the right would reflect auditory memory, and up to the right reflect visual memory. However, looking up and to the left indicates an attempt to try to make

something up, and down to the left indicates making up something with feeling.

You can actually try this out on yourself. Try to remember what you wore yesterday and notice what happens with your eyes. Now try to picture what your kitchen would look like with poke-a-dotted wallpaper. Notice your eyes glancing toward the left? Pretty cool, huh?

- Eyes looking down to the left are a sign of sensory memory, a memory of feeling or emotion. If you're trying to envision what it would be like to wake up in a bed of roses, your eyes look down and to the left. Eyes looking down and to the right indicate inner conversation with one's self. This is also a possible tell-tale of deceit as someone might be trying to create a memory that isn't real.
- The gesture of eyes darting in several directions is a sign of insecurity. This tells you that person is not really enjoying conversation with you, and perhaps you need to help them feel more secure.

Signs of domination…

If someone shakes your hand and their hand is on top, they're trying to dominate you. The best rapport is generated with an equal handshake with both parties squeezing equal pressure, both on the same angle to the ground. To make sure you're able to create an equal handshake, step to the left and forward a little when approaching a stranger for a handshake. Touching other parts of the body when shaking a strangers hand is not recommended. However, a brief touch to the elbow of the stranger has been shown to generate good feelings.

If you want to portray a look of confidence when speaking in public or in an interview, a gesture with hands together with fingertips touching is best.

Pointing or making gestures with accenting the points in your discussion with your forefinger and thumb touching helps you to come across as authoritative without looking too aggressive.

Holding hands behind the back display confidence, while holding hands on the hips with elbows out displays aggression, preparing to dominate. The complete hand inside the pocket indicates aggression, while leaving thumbs out indicates superiority. If the hands our held out from the body, this also shows that they are feeling superior.

Men who sit with open and uncrossed legs are showing dominance as the “alpha male”. The legs open gesture is actually true about dominance whether sitting or standing.

When a person sits inappropriately in a chair (as some children or adolescents do), they’re showing you that they don’t see you as important and they feel they are dominant. And, if someone faces you with a chair in front of them with the back facing you, it’s a strong indication of dominance and stubbornness.

Signs of mistrust…

A person will fold their hands in front of the body when they don’t trust you. Additionally, if the biceps are grasped at the same time, this demonstrates insecurity.

There are several different ways to interpret arms crossing, however. Arms crossed with fists forming will indicate hostility, while arms crossed with thumbs up shows that they're warming up to you.

Women sometimes use their purse to "shield" them from you if they feel threatened.

Also, be aware of a person with a drink who puts the drink on the opposite side from which they're drinking; that shows mistrust as well.

If a person has both their legs and arms crossed when sitting, never ask them to make a decision. They don't trust you. Furthermore, if they're holding their crossed leg with their hands, it's a sign of stubbornness.

Secrets to be discovered with the foot position…

When you're seated at rest, if one foot is pointed outward, it's pointing towards where you want to go. A person with one leg crossed on top of the other with hands behind the neck is extremely off-putting (especially to women). If the foot is wiggling when legs are crossed, that's a sign the person wants to get away from the situation.

Legs crossed at the angles shows fear, holding back a negative emotion. One leg crossed behind the other shows signs of being timid.

Beginning exercises…

Recognizing that this is a lot to take in and remember, I would first urge you to simply be aware of your own body language. You can never be sure what someone else is thinking and if their gestures are really reflecting their

thoughts. You can, however, be mindful of your own thoughts and notice your own gestures.

I notice that when I'm stumped or confused, I scratch my head, for example. Remembering your own gestures can attach that gesture with a *feeling*, and it's more solid in your mind – just as described with the mind palace concept.

Why notice body language?

This gives you another edge to "read between the lines"… just like Sherlock Holmes did when he noticed that the dog *did not* bark, giving evidence to the idea that the person who stole the horse may have been a friend of the family.

It's interesting to point out that we all, on some subconscious level, are able to read body language. The problem is that we don't know why. When presidential candidate Jeb Bush tilts his head to the side when talking about his brother or father, it's a sign that he's not in control. Whether that's true or not, his pole numbers are reflecting that people do not see him as a good presidential candidate.

Conversely, when Donald Trump shows his hands, it's telling us nonverbally that he has nothing to hide and we can trust him. Here again, whether true or not, his pole numbers are reflecting that people believe in him.

As we gain more understanding about how body language affects us subconsciously, we are able to notice things that other people can't. We become more mindful and able to make proper deductions.

CHAPTER 9:
HOW TO USE CRITICAL THINKING: DEDUCTION TOOL

When examining all data to start making deductions, it's imperative that you keep all emotion out of the way and use critical thinking.

What is critical thinking?

"Critical thinking" refers to thinking logically and objectively when analyzing or evaluating an issue. It takes practice to look at all angles objectively and without judgement. But this kind of thinking is necessary for investigators to make the right choices, or for you to make the right decision in your life. The quality of your thinking can be systematically cultivated to where you are making better decisions. Critical thinking is self-disciplined and self-monitored, as there is a constant strive for improvement.

As a qualified critical thinker, you should..

- Identify important questions concerning the issue and state the questions clearly.
- Assemble all data and assess pertinent information, using complex understanding.
- Arrive at a well-thought-out conclusion. But it doesn't stop there. Now you need to test your conclusion objectively against other relevant criteria.
- Think objectively, with an open mind towards any or all possibilities.
- Communicate your findings with others to mastermind for better possible solutions.

Think of a major decision you've made in your lifetime….

Remember, it's the thinking that you've done so far in your life that's brought you to where you are now. Quality of thought equals qualify of life. It's as simple as that.

Reflect on your own personal experience, and the choices you've made in your lifetime. Most likely, you have not arrived at your life choices objectively. As you recall your major life choice, answer the follow questions:

1) What choice did I have to make and what was the situation?
2) What alternatives did I have at the time for which I was not aware?
3) Did I miss those alternatives?
4) Why did I miss possible alternate life choices?
5) If I had considered all the pertinent other choices, how would I have acted?

It's easy for us to blame the problems we have on someone else, claiming that there was really no alternate road. However, this only brings you back to square one in the end. It's the very reason that the wives of abusers remarry to another man similar to the one she left. It's the reason why you can't seem to find that job or career that you really enjoy. It's even the reason why diets don't work.

Once we can accept responsibility for our own actions, we now have the ability to move forward to make better life choices and better decisions, and hence, shaping a new and improved life.

As a logical thinker, you need to develop the skill of diagnosing problems for customers or clients. Whether you're looking for ways to better evaluate what bills need paying, or ways to fix a computer, sharpening your critical thinking tools can always help.

So let's dive into some practical tips for putting an edge on your critical thinking…

- **The "conditional statement"**

Think about a cause and effect, and state clearly. For example, you could say, "If it rains, then then school is cancelled."

Let's take that sentence and dissect it. The first half "If it rains" is conditional. A logical statement with cause and effect is a conditional statement. The second part of the sentence, "then school is cancelled" is the result of the condition. This is logic… if the first part of the sentence is fulfilled, the latter will be true.

Conditional statements are worked a lot with math problems, but this kind of logical thinking can be applied to any situation. The conditional part of the sentence is the premise, and the second part of the sentence is the conclusion. Sometimes you see these in shorthand, as "p" and "q".

Even though the statement about taking care of the environment doesn't relate to math, the premise/conclusion shorthand can still be applied. If "p" then "q", represented as follows, "p → q".

- **The converse, inverse, and contrapositive**

Now that you understand p and q, it's easier to understand the converse, inverse, and contrapositive with logical thinking.

- **What is a "converse statement"**

This is where the premise and conclusion are reversed. An example of a converse statement would be "If school is cancelled, then it must have rained.".

But, wait a minute… does that mean that *any time* school is cancelled it's because of rain? Of course not! This means that the converse statement is a false syllogism".

The converse statement is not true because there are several different reasons why school could be cancelled apart from a rainy day.

Does the following make any sense?

- It is rains, then school is cancelled.
- School was cancelled.
- Therefore, it must have rained.

Another false syllogism is as follows:

- Cows have four legs.
- Horses have four legs.
- Therefore, cows are horses.

- **What is an inverse statement?**

With an inverse statement, the premise and conclusion stay in the same place in the sentence, but both premise and conclusion are negated.

Let’s take a look at the school inverse statement:

“If it *does not* rain, than school *is not* cancelled.

Here again, the reverse does not make any sense.

- **What is the contrapositive statement?**

This switches the premise and conclusion and negates both.

“If school is not cancelled, than it has not rained.” If the original statement is true, than the contrapositive statement is the only statement that should also be true in every case. In this illustration, the contrapositive statement does not make sense. Therefore, we can’t draw any conclusions that our original statement is true.

Critical thinking vs intuition….

Logic and critical thinking might be helpful with simple life choices – like finding your keys….

“When I lose my keys, I always find them in the last place I had them.”

The contrapositive of that is: “If I don’t find my keys in the last place I had them then I didn’t lose my keys.” Knowing that the above statement is true can help you remember to think about where you were instead of doing stupid things like looking under the bed.

Why do we make bad decisions?

It’s difficult to think objectively when emotions get in the way. That’s why step five of the critical thinking steps noted above is “communicate your findings with others” . Remember how Holmes would express his findings to Watson? Remember how House used Wilson as a sounding board to gain perspective? That’s what our friends are for.

“In leadership, it’s important to be intuitive, but not at the expense of facts.”…
Michel Dell, founder of Dell Computers

If only we had someone would tell us the formula to tell us what we should do all the time, we wouldn’t have to worry about making bad decisions. Well, as it turns out, someone did. In the 1738 by a Dutch mathematician by the name of Daniel Bernoulli gave us a “formula”. …

“The expected value of any of our actions the goodness that we can count on getting is the product of two things: the odds that this action will allow us to gain something, and the value of that gain to us.” … **Daniel Bernoulli**

Sounds simple on the surface; if we can estimate and multiply these two items, we can always anticipate the outcome.

The problem is that rational decisions *do not* always aim to gain maximum health and happiness. The more we reject, the more loss we feel. Unfortunately, there’s always human error involved. People make errors in estimating the gain that they will feel, and they also make errors in estimating the value of the success.

Calculating odds for estimating gain…

We tend to calculate in general by scanning our memory of past situations to come up with a quick conclusion. If you were asked if it's more common to see dogs on leashes or cats on leashes, you would very quickly reply "dogs, of course". So this is a really useful rule of thumb.

Except it doesn't always work…

Suppose you were asked if there are more 4-letter words in English language with the first letter R or the third letter R. The mind recalls words that begin with R first, even though, in reality, there are more words with the letter R in the third place. This is an example of how the mind can lead you astray.

We tend to make decisions on things because we make a quick scan in our brain. We think about situations to which we have been exposed and make that "quick brain scan" decision.

This can be dangerous, if you're not aware of why you're making that decision.

For example, why do people play the lottery?

Statistics tell us that we're more likely to get struck by lightning than win the lottery, so why do we play?

Marketing has a lot to do with why we make stupid choices. We scan our brains and think about that nice couple we hear on the radio who won five million bucks. We remember the winners we've seen on TV. And, in the short time that we're buying that ticket, as we think about the possibilities of becoming rich, serotonin is released in the brain and we feel happy. That feeling outweighs the feeling we get when we

discover we didn't win, because we never really expected to win in the first place.

Errors in Value…

Additionally, we tend to make those "quick brain scan" comparisons when estimating value.

Would you pay $20 for a bottle of water? Of course not. Your brain compares to what you know and tells you that water isn't worth that much. But what if you were crossing the desert on foot and there was no way you could buy any other water? Suddenly the water becomes more valuable. Rather than comparing the investment to other possible investments, we made the choice "it's not worth that much" based on our past experience.

Making decisions based on past experience can befuddle the decisions we make, because we fail to see the entire context.

Additionally, we make choices based on comparison…

Marketers love this! You see all the time things that are "marked down" in the market – and are you more likely to buy? Of course!

You might see a wine from $20 to $15 and you believe at the time you're buying that it's a great deal. However, once you get home, you really can't tell the difference between that new bottle and the $10 bottle in your refrigerator.

You have just been duped by a marketing scam that made you believe you were getting a good deal when you weren't. This is because you didn't look at the entire situation in context.

Another value judgement error…

You need a new car stereo, and the cost at the dealer in your neighborhood is $200. But you have an offer to get the same stereo for only $100 on the other side of town. Do you drive across town to save $100? Most people would.

But suppose you were buying a new car with a stereo and the cost was $40,000, but if you drove across town, you would get the car for $39,900. Would you drive across town to another dealership to save that $100? Most people would not.

We tend to not take things into the proper context.

Errors in judgement with time….

The problem with decision making when making comparisons is even more difficult when the choices are arrayed over time.

Basically, there are two reasons why we make bad decisions over time: We tend to rationalize…

1) More is always better than less.
2) Now is always better than later.

We find ourselves paying high interest rates to have our cake NOW, rather than later.

What’s interesting is that we can make the impatience go away by simply changing the expected time of gratification.

Would you rather get $50 in a year or $60 in 13 months? Most people tell themselves, “I’m already waiting a year, what’s one more month?” And they elect the latter. Yet if you were given the same opportunity to get $50 now or $60 next month, you’re probably want to take $50 *NOW*.

When we look into the distance, our perception is more correct than when we look at something with the expectation of receiving now.

“What space is to size, time is to value” … **Plato**

When people get into the future, they change their mind.

This is why we underestimate the odds of our future pain and overestimate the value of our future pleasure.

Perhaps the formula given to us by Daniel Bernoulli would have worked if our brains didn’t have to combat the issues given to us in today’s world. Our brains were evolved for a world in which the highest priority is to eat and mate and little contact with anyone outside of our own culture. Bernoulli’s formula tells us how we should think in a world in which nature never designed us.

This punctuates the issue of how important it is for us to start re-training our brains to think more critically and start looking at the decisions we make in full context of the situation at hand.

The *only thing* that can destroy is making bad decisions.

CHAPTER 10:
MAKKING DEDUCTIONS FROM INTUITION

Have you ever had a “gut feeling” that turned out to be right? We all have been bestowed with the power of intuition. Unfortunately, the human animal is taught from the very beginning *not to trust* his intuition, while every other species on the planet grows to sharpen their intuition.

As humans, we’re taught from an early age to follow directions and *not trust* our own instincts. We’re taught that asking questions from our colleagues is “cheating”, and we need to get our own information without the help of others.

Unfortunately, this has served to our detriment.

What decisions have you made based on outside sources?

We all need each other to help us make the decisions we construct. Every time we’re listening to a friend or reading a book, our brains are being fed with outside information. Our brains collect that data to assist in making up our own psyche. Our friends, relatives and loved ones sometimes can play a major part in our decision making process.

As for me, I remember a time when I had gone back to college to finish my psychology degree with the hopes and inspiration to take my career to a new level of enjoyment.

But that’s not what I found. Instead, my decision was swayed by my husband and colleague where I was coerced to start working for a colleague with a new business – in the same field as that which I had been working and had been so frustrated. He had hired my husband already, so this

really skewed my decision. “It’ll be fun” said my husband with anticipation of working together as a family.

Bottom line… my husband was let go three months in, and I was left holding the bag. I didn’t trust my inner voice and the churning in my stomach because I was taught to listen to outside data only. Consequently, I was a victim of having been used by outside sources to make a major life decision.

Have you made a similar mistake with any major life choice?

Where did I go wrong?

I really can’t blame those who swayed my decision because there were several things I could have achieved, had I known about the power of intuition… the power that you’ll learn in this chapter.

Clarity of decision…

First of all, I didn’t have any idea what I would like to do “when I grew up”. Intuitive thoughts come from having a *clear decision* on what you want to do. Many of us don’t even allow those “wishful thoughts” to enter our head. We’re taught to pursue careers that have “integrity”, careers that are “secure”.

Getting clarity of decision means *allowing* yourself to pursue your innermost desires. It helps to write down *exactly* what you want and where you want to go. You need to stay aware of your feelings.

The two minute rule….

Have you ever thought of something inspiring, but then you were interrupted because of your daily work schedule? And

then, later in the day, you couldn't remember that awesome miraculous idea? That's because of the two-minute rule. The very moment you have an impulse, act on it. Of course, we all live in a world surrounded by responsibilities of daily life, and sometimes you just can't drop everything. Just be aware that it's your inner voice and write it down!

Intuition works only if you have a *strong intention* to put to use. Then, once you do, opportunities seem to come to you from everywhere out of the woodwork. It's the *intention* that brings the *intuition* to life. It changes from thought to reality at this point. Once you've set the intention in action, more intuitive thoughts come your way.

The "good enough" decision…

People who are known for making proper deductions for a lifetime decision seem to have the ability to make rush decisions. That actually comes from skilled and practiced intuition. Due to lack of time in our busy world, this is sometimes the only way. Doctors, while in the middle of surgery, don't have the time to say, "wait a second; hold on a minute. I need to check all my resources"… they simply rely on their best intuition at the time. These people have one thing in common – they have confidence. One thing they are *NOT* is ambivalent about any decision.

How can you gain confidence to know you're making the right decision at the right time?

Just take the leap and go with your gut instinct. Whenever it's right, you gain a little confidence and you're able to trust your instincts a little more the next time.

Of course, for doctors and people like Sherlock Holmes, it's an "educated intuition"… doing that quick scan on the brain

to come up with the best answer. Often times, it's the answer that's *good enough* that makes the best decision. Quick deductions that bring forth the "good enough" answer fast is often be much better than a decision that's "excellent" but too late.

A good rule of thumb to go by here is that we really only need to know two things before making that rushed decision:

"Where am I going?"
"What do I need to do next?"

I couldn't make a decent or even a "good enough" life choice because I didn't have a clear picture first of what I even wanted. If you don't know where you're going, you'll never know how to get there.

Even though Sherlock Holmes was known for remembering facts and drawing conclusions, his actions very often would show evidence that he was actually relying on his intuition combined with remembering facts to solve problems. Allowing logic and intuition to work together will give you the greatest advantage.

"My brain is only a receiver, in the universe there is a core from which we obtain knowledge, strength, and inspiration. I have not penetrated into the secrets of this core, but I know that it exists."… **Nikola Tesla, Serbian American inventor**

OK, so you know it works, but how can you know you can trust it?

You might have acted out on an "intuitive thought" and then later you regretted taking that action. My own thoughts

come to mind here of those stupid snakeskin leather pants I bought and never wore. How can you tell it's it a *constructive message* sent to help you?

The answer lies in being aware of how you're feeling.

Intuitive "tricks" to help you develop your intuition for making deductions…

- ***Trust your intuition.***

  All too many of us tend to dismiss intuition as unreliable – something out of the supernatural. How do you know the difference between being aware of a message that can help you out and just doing something on a whim that you will later regret? You need to stay in touch with your feelings. When you get that initial whirlwind thought, the first thing to do is to act on it. Then, as you're beginning to act, be aware of how it makes you feel. Are you a little nervous that those leather pants won't look good on you for long and your bank account will show $50 less? Do you feel a strong sense of excitement since making this new decision? It might help to write down you decision first and read it to yourself. As you read about the decision that you just made, how does it make you feel?

  As you become more aware of your feelings, you'll develop a habit for making good decisions. Sometimes you'll know the right answer without even knowing why.

  "From long habit the train of thoughts ran so swiftly through my mind that I arrived at the conclusion

without being conscious of intermediate step.” .....
Sherlock Holmes

And, like Holmes, it’s always a good idea to sound out your newfound conclusion on a trusted level-headed friend.

- ***Develop a knack for studying people.***

Once you begin to stay aware of body language to surmise the character of others, you will start to sharpen your intuitive skills. The former body language chapter has given you pointers to know whether a person is deceitful or honest. You can begin by just watching people in general at the mall or a park and notice mannerisms and body language gestures. Try to imagine what they’re thinking or how they’re feeling.

- ***Enhance your observation potential.***

Everyone has the ability to be just as observant as Sherlock Holmes. But most people don’t work at it.

We tend to take our senses for granted. If, instead, we concentrate daily on the three most used senses, sight, smell and sound, we develop a tool of perception to notice and observe things that others don’t see. Beware of making quick assumptions of what you see and begin to really observe using the skills taught in this book. Use your judgement to focus on relevant details.

"It is the highest importance in the art of detection to be able to recognize out of a number of facts,

which are incidental and which are vital."
.... **Sherlock Holmes**

You can practice this skill by simply playing crossword puzzles. Also, works of art where there are hidden images help to sharpen your observation skills.

If you're not sure how observant you are – just ask yourself. "What do I remember about my sister's home? What color is it? What's her bedroom color scheme?" You might be amazed at how much you don't know.

- ***Avoid becoming overconfident.***

Other people can be extremely complex, and it's dangerous to underestimate the variegated minds of others. Pay attention to simple things like gossip, politics and social media to understand how other people think.

- ***Trim down observations by deducting all factors that are not pertinent.***

And, that which remains is the truth. Be careful not to skew your facts to fit your original theory. Instead, the theory must fit the facts. Any piece of factual data that disproves your theory means that you need to do away with that part of your theory and move forward with that which remains.

Lay down your foundation for a motive when formulating your conclusive theory. Considering all options using your new habits of recognizing body language can help here. For example, being aware

of jealousy or the need to save face can help you recognize the truth in a situation.

- ***Consider facts: who, what, where, when and why.***

Learn how to ask yourself the right questions to gain a true perspective on any situation.

CHAPTER 11:
HOW TO ASK YOURSELF THE RIGHT QUESTIONS

Whether we're aware of it or not, we ask ourselves hundreds of questions as we go throughout the day. The purpose of this chapter is to help increase your awareness of the kinds of questions you're asking yourself. Why? Because the quality of questions we ask ourselves is in direct proportion to the quality of our life!

"Quality questions create a quality life. Successful people ask better questions, and as a result, they get better answers.".... **Tony Robbins**

If you're trudging through your day thinking (or asking yourself), "Why does this always happen to me?" Bingo! That's why – because you're inviting those negative thoughts into your brain with your questions. Fat people are always asking, "Why is it so hard to lose weight?" And poor people are always asking "When is the economy going to get better so I can find a job?" And sick people are always asking, "Why can't I shake this on-going cold?"

Do yourself a favor – learn to ask yourself better questions.

Especially when it comes to serious deductions to make life-changing decisions, the quality of your question is imperative.

Outline for how to phase your life-changing questions….

In most cases, the choices we make are not so important. It's best not to be ambivalent but go with your gut instinct

as we make small decisions during the day. This forces us to "course correct" when we make the wrong choice. The more decisions you make, the more answers you come up with. And, the more answers you come up, the faster your learning and growing process. But sometimes we have hard, possibly life-changing choices to make.

Here are a few pointers to help guide you when making those life-changing decisions…

- "Do I have a clear vision as to what I *really* want?"

  If you don't know where you're going, you'll never get there. This really makes so much sense when you think about it. Yet most people, when asked, don't really know what they want. In fact, most of us won't even*allow* ourselves to think we deserve everything we want.

  So take out a piece of paper and write down what it is you really want. (The act of writing down manually on paper is more powerful than typing, because the motor memory in your hand helps trigger the impulse to put into action.)

  Having a vision is nothing more than a dream until you decide to *make the intention* to put your dream into action.

  "It doesn't matter where you are. You are nowhere compared to where you can go."… **Bob Proctor**

- "Does this choice of mine take me closer to my vision?"

Once you have a clear picture of what you want, it becomes easier to see if the choice you're about to make will draw you closer to your dream. Will it keep you from having the time to pursue your dream? Or will it be that one step that you need to take you closer to your ultimate goal? If your goal is to become a concert pianist, perhaps playing nightclubs is a way to work your way up.

- "Does it feel right?"

As pointed out in the last chapter, being aware of your feelings is an extremely useful guide when making decisions. Are you excited about your new venture or does it make your stomach churn? Does it feel like you can't wait to get started? Or does it feel like you wish you didn't have to do it? Be aware of whether you're reacting or responding.

"When you react, you're giving away your power; when you respond, you are staying in control of yourself." .... **Bob Proctor**

- "Does my decision have an impact on anyone else?"

It's good to consider all angles when making life changing decisions. For example, if you're considering marriage to a new partner, one key question you might ask yourself is "How will this decision affect my daughter's life?"

The people around you where your connections are strongest can have a substantial effect on whether or not a decision is best for you. For this question,

try to take note of the facts while leaving your emotions out of the picture.

- “Is this scaring me?”

A certain amount of nervousness is normal when venturing past your comfort zone, but you should also be sensing excitement and anticipation.

Move out of your comfort zone. You can only grow if you are willing to feel awkward and uncomfortable when you try something new…. **Brian Tracy**

So how can you tell the difference between a good scare and a bad scare? Again, turn to your feelings. Try to picture yourself already having achieved your desire. Can you see yourself carrying through with the decision you’ve made? If so, then the choice is simple. The next step is to simply act as though you already have it.

“Begin to live as though your prayers are already answered.”… **Tony Robbins**

- “If I make this choice, how can I achieve it?”

The experts tell us not to worry about the how. Edison didn’t know how he would create the light bulb; he only knew that he would. Ford didn’t know how he would create the first car; he only knew that that would. Alexander Graham Bell didn’t know how he would create the first phone; he only knew that he would.

“How” you can accomplish your entire mission should not be your concern. Once you made a decision to act on your impulse, the way will be made for you, taking one step at a time.

"Take the first step in faith. You don't have to see the whole staircase. Just take the first step"...
Martin Luther King, Jr.

While asking yourself "how" as you go along the way is good, be more specific with open-ended questions, and just take one step at time.

Empowering questions attract empowering decisions. The decisions you make on a daily basis form your life. It's important to note here that we all make decisions on a daily basis throughout the day, and they're not all good. It's the bad decisions that help us learn and become better at what we do.

"Decisiveness is a characteristic of high-performing men and women. Almost any decision is better than no decision at all.... **Brian Tracy**

Questions to NOT ask yourself…

Most of us tend to ask ourselves the wrong questions as we go through our daily lives. Surprisingly, our brains always will form answers to questions we ask. If you ask a disempowering question, you'll get a disempowering answer. These are some of the most popular questions asked, and how to turn them into productive questions...

- "Why do bad things like this always happen to me?"

This is an invitation to the universe to send everything bad your way. An alternate question might be "What can I learn from this experience?"

- "Why can't I ever lose weight?"

Be careful on this one… your brain is likely to answer "Because you're a pig"! This would lead to feelings of insecurity, and that leads to more eating the wrong stuff. A more empowering question would be "How can I lose weight in a way where I'm having fun and enjoying life?" Your brain now might come up with fun activities that will keep you away from food and having fun.

- "Why doesn't anyone ever want to hire someone like me?"

This question leaves the door wide up for yet another insult from your brain, leading to more feelings of inadequacy. A more empowering question might be "What can I do to stand out so potential employers can see me as a good candidate?"

Ask your brain a better question, and you'll get a better answer.

Exercise for learning to ask the best questions…

Brain stimulation games can be fun and a good way to help you develop your question asking abilities.

- "I am thinking of" game:

This can be played a parties or even with children.

You simply state part of what you're thinking about…

"I am thinking about something green".

Each person has 3 chances to formulate a good question that can lead to more information. For example, "Does it have a picture of George Washington?"

The person who guesses gets the reward of being the next "it" who gets to think up something for people to guess.

- “Coffee Pot” game:

In this game, one person who’s “it” goes out and the rest of the people decide on an action that the person will have to guess. When the person comes back, they formulate questions to each person, with the words “coffee pot” instead of the action word.

For example, the action to guess might be “brush your teeth”. And the person might ask “Do you coffee pot often?” The answer, of course, reveals how often that person brushes. The next person would (or should) have a different question.

Conventional vs open-ended questions…

When you continue to ask yourself a series of open-ended questions, it’s different from factual data where you can gather information and deduce answers. When a question is open-ended, i.e., “How do you feel about…?” then there is more room to gather additional information. This is why psychologists are always asking their clients, “How do you feel about that?”

An example of a conventional question might be “What are you doing to live a healthier lifestyle?”

The open-ended version of that question would be “How would you feel once you’re living a healthier life?”

An open-ended question allows the person to think of other alternatives, hence, giving you more information to draw your conclusion.

When we ask ourselves open-ended questions, more thoughts and inspiration comes our way.

“Questions focus our thinking. Ask empowering questions like: What’s good about this? What’s not perfect about it

yet? What am I going to do next time? How can I do this and still have fun doing it?”… **Charles Connolly**

CHAPTER 12:
HOW TO USE YOUR NEW MINDFUL HABITS TO MAKE GOOD LIFE DECISIONS

By now you're starting to realize that acquiring habits of mindfulness is much more than learning to be a detective. Let's summarize by recapping the ways that your new mindful habits can make a difference in your life.

Now you have an awareness that arises from "paying attention on purpose". You're enjoying life by noticing what there is to enjoy in the present, and you find yourself less judgmental. Hopefully, the chapters in this book have helped you notice exactly how much you've been missing by not being aware.

There are basically four ways that mindfulness habits can improve your life…

- Mindfulness habits improve your health.

If you've been practicing mindfulness medication, than no doubt you've already discovered that you feel healthier. Suddenly that car that cut you off doesn't seem to bother you. You're free from stress and anxiety. And, that's a major thing, because stress is connected with all parts of the body. Whatever your ailment, whether blood pressure, pain or even a simple rash, when you're stressed, everything is worse.

Therefore, you'll be enjoying health benefits of strengthened immune system, lowered blood pressure, reduced pain, and alleviated gastrointestinal problems.

Mindfulness has been proven to benefit health for so many years that it's actually a therapy used to treat all kinds of

illness.

One study at Northern Arizona University shed light on startling information regarding the physical and mental health of people who practice mindfulness habits such as meditation. The study was conducted by Dr. Heidi Wayment, a psychologist, Drs. Bill Wilst and Meghan Warren, health scientists, and Dr. Bruce Sullivan, a doctor of religion.

They assessed 866 Buddhist practitioners worldwide to determine the impact that meditation has on the body. The results revealed astonishing improvement on both physical and mental health for those who have learned to focus mind and stay calm.

- Mindfulness habits improve feelings.

Mindful habits support the feeling of being satisfied with your life. Personally, I can testify that, since practicing the habits taught in this book, I actually feel more satisfied with my life and grateful for everything around me. It wasn't long ago when I thought that all my friends had deserted me. But now I'm finding that I have more social engagements on my calendar than I ever did before.

This really makes sense from a scientific point of view. Did you ever notice that when you're about to buy a new car, suddenly you see that model everywhere? It seems that when you're really focused and interested in something, you start to see similar stuff all around you.

Scientists call this phenomenon "meta-perceptual vigilance". It's a known fact that when you're focused on something, you see more of it. It's not because things appear that were not there before. My friends were always there. But I didn't*feel* like anyone liked me. Once my focus

was turned to compassion and love, it *appeared to me* that friends just came out of the woodwork.

“Change the way you look at things, and the things you look at change”…. **Dr. Wayne Dyer**

Once you train yourself to be aware of simple pleasures in life, it feels as though more pleasures come your way.

- Mindfulness habits improve mental health.

Mindfulness meditation has been used to treat substance abuse, depression, bulimia problems, marriage trouble, anxiety and OCD (obsessive compulsive disorder). It gives you freedom from thoughts, feelings and emotions that, when left to their own, could cause damage to your mental health.

Have you ever noticed that when you’re angry, your thoughts are focused so much on the issue that made you angry that you’re soon just ready to explode? Ironically, thoughts alone have a very short lifespan. It’s only when we continue to feed our minds with negative thoughts that our anger can result in any one of the above mental health problems. Habits of mindfulness are the antidote to anger. They help break down our negative thoughts, bringing peace and better mental health.

Many psychologists believe that mindfulness is effective because it encourages people to accept their own situation of where they are in life. So your mother-in-law has Alzheimer’s and asks the same question dozens of times. This used to drive you crazy, but now you just accept that this is where she is on her journey. Acceptance brings peace in any situation.

- Habits of mindfulness increase conscious awareness.

Once you're in the habit of practicing becoming more aware, you start noticing that you're making mistakes less and you more conscious of everything. You're not always losing your keys. You're not telling your kids "sure" when you really mean "no". Those episodes in your life were a product of multi-tasking.

Your new note-taking habit is helping you recall important things throughout the day that need your attention. Now you're not breaking your focus by trying to do too many things at once. Instead, you simply write down another task as it comes to mind, and then release it, enabling you to focus more on the task at hand.

If something comes to mind that's inspirational, there's no need to let it trample through your mind only to forget minutes later. Now you're writing it down in your handy notepad, allowing that moment of inspiration to come to you when you need it.

The memory tricks you've learned in the mind palace chapter have enabled you to remember things in a more orderly fashion. You are no longer scatterbrained, but now able to focus with less error and better memory.

Now you're better equipped to notice characteristics about people that you once would never see. Knowing what body language gestures insinuate gives you an edge when participating in an interview or making that sale. You're able to make better judgements on political candidates. You now see where your emotions might get in the way of making major decisions, and you're thinking more rationally to make better choices.

Now you're aware of stupid errors in judgement that you used to have, and your new critical thinking tool has helped you to make new life choices that affect you and the ones you love in a positive way.

And your new positive life decision?

Now you're aware that simply knowing what you want and deciding to go after it is everything. You're cognizant of the fact that writing down your decision brings forth desire to take action. And it's action that turns your dream into reality.

You're now aware of whenever you're asking yourself a stupid question. Instead, you give yourself a better question to get a better answer. Now you know that better answers can always be provided for you when you ask with positive expectations.

You trust your intuition now, because you're more confident that whatever happens is fine with you.

It might take a little time and effort to acquire better mindful habits, but it's well worth the effort.

Now that you've acquired habits of mindfulness, these are some things you'll be enjoying…

- You're enjoying nature walks.
- You're aware of how daily tasks can turn into moments that appear miraculous.
- You're not distracted with a thousand things a day at once.
- You're excited to seek out new experiences.

- You’re aware of your feelings and conscious of your own body.
- You’re aware of others’ feelings and appear to be more compassionate.

It’s important to remember that’s there’s no end to achieving habits of mindfulness. Life is a journey, and we’re happiest and most satisfied when we’re continuing to grow in awareness. I hope this book has inspired and encouraged you to enjoy the journey of mindfulness!

About the Author

Stefan Cain has spent the majority of his working career in numerous academic research positions, working on a wealth of psychological, societal and cultural topics. His research work and adept studies have been used to form the backbone of many popular titles available today, providing him with the experience and hunger to delve deeper into some avenues of thought.

Alongside his serious academic work, Stefan has been published in a number of prominent publications; filing news reports, features and insightful opinion pieces on myriad topics throughout his career. It was here, in this capacity as a journalist, that he first began to start writing about human behavior.

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